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THE TANNISHO

(TRACT ON DEPLORING THE
HETERODOXIES)

An Important Text-book of Shin Buddhism
founded by Shinran (1173-1262)

Translated from the Japanese

by

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THE
EASTERN BUDDHIST SOCIETY

OTANI DAIGAKU, KARASUMARU-DORI

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The present ^{Californian} devotional tract which goes under the name of "Tannishō," was compiled by one of the immediate disciples of Shinran Shōnin (1173-1262), called Yui-embō. When he was quite old, that is, when some years passed after the death of the master, Yui-embō found that his master's teaching as he understood it being orally transmitted to him by the master, was so variously interpreted, and not always in the spirit of the master. He lamented the state of affairs, and decided to write this booklet quoting some of the most important sayings of Shinran Shōnin in order to put an end to the spreading of heterodoxies. The name of the author remained unknown for some time, because he did not leave any record of it. But after much laborious investigation on the part of scholars, it was finally discovered that the author was Yui-embō—the name referred to in the ninth and the thirteenth paragraph.

According to the postscript written by Rennyo Shōnin (1415-1444) which is generally found attached to *The Tannishō*, he advises not to show the booklet to those who have not accumulated enough stock of merit in the past, as the book contains the most important teaching of Shin Buddhism. It is only recently that the booklet came to be popularly studied.

Preface

3-26-59
In presenting *The Tannisho*, which is one of the most important books of Shin Buddhism, to our English readers, I humbly ask their indulgence to go over the following account of my personal experience in the great earthquake disaster and the fire which broke out immediately after it on September 1, 1923.

At the time of the earthquake, I happened to be in the great three-storied brick building of the Yokohama District Court, which fell literally to pieces in less than three seconds. It was a miracle indeed that I could escape from under the mountain of debris.

When I stood on the top of it, I was awe-struck at the tremendous destruction achieved by nature. The scene before me was beyond description—a field of devastation with not a house or godown in its proper form, for all the roofs and walls were levelled down to

the ground. I saw fire breaking out everywhere, and the whole city of Yokohama turned into a furious mass of smoke and flame. I had no conception at the time about the extent of the loss of human lives, and as that terrible mountain-range, as it were, of black smoke driven by the raging wind, was rapidly approaching where I was standing, the only thought I had was to choose a place of refuge; I ran toward the custom-house compound. This, however, was doomed to be devoured by the fire, and I had to make a further escape to one of the warehouses which seemed to be comparatively safe. By this time, refugees of all descriptions and from all directions, about two hundreds in number, were crowding into this one warehouse. The ground where we stood was only of a few yards in width occupying the extreme end of the wharf which had already been partly destroyed, and was being beaten by angry waves. The warehouses around us were all on fire, and the one which

was giving us shelter began to be enveloped in fire; I gauged from what I had already witnessed that it would take less than a quarter of an hour to get our last refuge consumed by the conflagration. A man standing by asked me in despair, "What will become of us now?" I could give him no better answer than this, "Our dates and places of birth are different, but that of death is probably the same."

We seemed now to be breathing our last, between the fast approaching fire and the angrily beating waves; death was everywhere, no life, no hope! All of a sudden, a chimney emitting lively smoke appeared at some distance from behind one of the steamers at anchor. "Life-boat," cried I, "let us call for it this way if possible." All eyes turned toward the boat, and all mouths joined in breaking out into "Banzai." The launch with a big lighter in tow, drew along the half-destroyed wharf. About two hundred souls, men, women, children, were now safely in the lighter,

which was now covered to keep off the burning embers. A few minutes later, the launch stopped, and the cover was removed, and found ourselves alongside a fine steamer. As soon as we were all aboard, I looked; the warehouse, our last shelter, was already gutted through.

It is not my intention to bore my readers with a personal account in this crisis, only I wish to remind them of the fact that just a minute's difference means life or death in this frail human existence. I am not sermonising, however; I just want to state that here is a profound truth and yet what forgetful mortals we all are! According to an American statistician, about 43,370,000 persons die every year in the world. With or without such a disastrous earthquake as we had in 1923, over one hundred thousand souls are wiped off the earth in one day not knowing where they went. This problem has been attacked from the very beginning of the world by so many philosophers and reflective minds, but so far no definitely satis-

factory answer has been given. It is to be answered by each mortal being himself, for no medicine is able to cope with death. The terrible fire behind us, and the devouring waves before, we must have a launch ready in time. At the time of my escape, I had a copy of *The Tannishō* in my pocket, and after recovering my poise of mind aboard the steamer, I took the book out, and my eyes fell upon the passage, "When the thought is awakened in your heart to say the Nembutsu, believing that your rebirth in the Pure Land is attained through the inconceivable power of Amida's 'Original Vow,' you come to share in His Grace which embraces all beings, forsaking none." How deeply I was struck by this at that moment! I appeal to the imagination of my readers.

The following translation in a language not my own, is the outcome of my pious desire to share my gratitude for the boundless mercy of Amitabha Buddha with those into whose hands this may fall.

In closing this prefatory note, I wish to tender respectfully my heartfelt gratitude to the late Reverend Gesshō Sasaki, President of Otani University, of Kyoto, for writing a life of Shinran Shōnin to be prefixed to this translation, and also for giving valuable suggestions while the work was in progress.

My cordial thanks are also due to Professors Daisetsu Teitaro Suzuki and Shugaku Yamabe; the former for his assistance in the translation itself, and the latter for writing an introduction to the text, and explaining to me many difficult passages. Further, I must not forget to mention the name of Mr. Motozo Matsutani as one without whose encouragement both moral and substantial, this humble work would never have seen the light.

TOSUI IMADATE

Ashiya, January 1928

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Introduction

The Tannishō consists of some of the sayings of Shinran Shōnin, the founder of Shin Buddhism, and of the compiler's commentary notes. The reason why this booklet has recently gained popularity in preference to the several other works written by Shinran Shōnin himself is that it not only breathes the spirit of the Shōnin in a most characteristic manner, but illustrates his influence on his disciples.

From the historical point of view it may require a great deal of arguments and demonstrations to show how Shin Buddhism came to form an independent sect of Buddhism in Japan, after some sixteen hundred years since the Nirvana, and, above all, how this almost insignificant booklet as far as its size is concerned, came to be considered one of the most representative works in the teaching of Shin Buddhism, in which the true spirit of its founder is clearly transmitted. The following in short is

my line of argument to establish the thesis.

(1) *What is Buddhism?*

Etiologically it may be said that Buddhism owes its origin to the fact that the Buddha attained his enlightenment under the Bodhi tree more than two thousand years ago in India. All the sutras are the compilations of his teachings which were given from time to time to different persons under different circumstances whenever such were needed. They, therefore, embody in beautiful words the instructions of the Enlightened One (i.e., the Buddha), given in accordance with requirements of the day. Before he attained his enlightenment, he was an ordinary person, though a prince he was, of the world, and destined to ultimate death. When he attained enlightenment, he became conscious of his immortality. The new state into which he was ushered, was so exalted and sublime, that it was impossible to express it in human language.

Consequently, he wished to remain silent, but at his second thought he resolved to open the way of salvation for all mankind. Tradition says that, during this period of silence, Brahma, the highest god worshipped by the Hindus, appeared to him from heaven, and persuaded him to propagate the highest wisdom he had now gained, and said, "If you should remain silent, all the world would be engulfed in a chasm of destruction." From this we can see that this aim of the Buddha who came down from his high position of enlightenment, was to achieve universal salvation, and at the same time to gain true signification by being expressed and imparted to all mankind.

If we examine the early steps taken by the Buddha in order to impart the benefit of his enlightenment to the world as are recorded in the Āgamas or Nikāyas and Vināyas which are generally regarded as the earliest sutras, we find that his teaching consisted in telling his disciples and followers to

cease from worshipping Brahma as the creator of the world, from making all kinds of religious sacrifices which were required by Brahmanism, then the existing religion of India, and from following the doctrines of sophists and ascetics; he taught, on the contrary, to cultivate and elevate our minds through a regulated life based on sound conscience. Accordingly, his disciples left their homes and joined the teacher for the purpose of learning and practicing the "Fourfold Noble Truth" and leading a pure and charitable life. The "Fourfold Noble Truth" is (1) suffering, (2) accumulation, (3) annihilation, and (4) path.

As suffering results from the assertion and accumulation of worldly passions, the latter must be annihilated in order to attain enlightenment. The path leading to this end is made up of the Eightfold Right Path, such as right view, right thinking, etc., which were taught to the disciples who put them into practice in order to attain en-

lightenment. The lay-followers were told to find their spiritual refuge in the "Three Treasures" (Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha) and to observe their morality which consists in abstention from murder, theft, adultery, falsehood, and liquor, while they were engaged in the ordinary affairs of their lives, and were only asked to believe in the teaching of the Buddha. Though these two classes of Buddhists, Bhikshus and lay-disciples, differed in their mode of life, they are said to have equally attained the Dharma of immortality leading to a high spiritual state free from sin and ignorance.

The foregoing brief exposition may serve to furnish the reader with a general idea as to what Buddhism is. Even in our days, we have almost as many false religions as there were in the time of the Buddha. Some of them teach to pray and make offerings to the gods in order to gain some material advantages by doing so, while others waste their time in subtle hair-splitting discussions,

or in performing all sorts of religious austerities, or in worshipping a despotic god as the creator and organiser of the world. All these religions are from the Buddhist point of view not in the right track of religion in its true sense.

(2) *The Mahayana and the Hinayana.*

Even according to the earlier sutras of primitive Buddhism so called, every careful reader will notice that the teaching of the Buddha as aforesaid was a quite reasonable religion, it was universally meant for all kinds and all classes of people regardless of caste, sex, social position, mode of living, that is to say, that Buddhism was a religion for all people. Unfortunately, this fact remained unobserved for so many years, and I am afraid that even now there are some people who regard Buddhism as meant only for the special class of Bhikshus and Bhikshnis. This made the Buddha a mere author of monastic discipline, and an advocate of solitari-

ness. But at the same time there was another class of Buddhists who saw in the master a great philosopher, a profound mystic, who was an incarnate of the Dharmakāya. These two currents of thought ran through the history of Buddhism; the one is known as Hinayana, and the other, Mahayana. The latter, as far as we can judge from the Buddhist literature now extant, is supposed to have started in the second century of the Buddha. I am not going to discuss in detail the problem of the origin of Mahayana Buddhism. I wish to say only this, that the dividing line between the Hinayana and the Mahayana is represented by one between conservatives and liberals. The one appeared to cling to the literal tradition of the Brotherhood neglecting to accommodate itself to the changing spirit of the time, whereas the other, being progressive and liberal in spirit, knew how to adjust itself to the demand of the growing generations. The original teaching so called of the Buddha was

given by this progressive party a new interpretation which was inculcated to be deeply metaphysical and quite esthetic. Its followers came to emphasise the householder-element in Buddhism, that is, a religion for the masses. The Hinayana conservatives are now flourishing in Ceylon, Burma, and Siam; Mahayanism has spread over China and Japan.

(3) *Shin Buddhism as Religion
for the Householder.*

While Mahayana Buddhism advocates in many of its texts a religion for householders, that is, the lay-followers of the Buddha, no such special sect as a branch of Buddhism has come into existence. Buddhism has remained what it used to be from its inception in India. It was not until it was brought into Japan that it at last assumed the Shin form of teaching in which it became possible for householders as well as Bhikshus to share in the blessing of the teaching. This was due to the religious insight

of Prince Shōtoku and of Shinran Shōnin.

The gist of this householder Buddhism consists in believing in the "Original Vow" of Amitabha Buddha, which is expounded in the Buddhist sutra known as the *Sutra of the Great Eternally-Living One*. Shinran Shōnin bases his doctrine on the teaching of this sutra. In the first volume, Śākyamuni explains how Amitabha Buddha, the Great Eternal One, whence the Buddha himself has issued, came to make his forty-eight "Original Vows," and how the realisation of these Vows is testified in the establishment of the Name of Amitabha Tathagata; and in the second volume, the life of the followers of this doctrine is described.

In this sutra, therefore, we find what Śākyamuni Buddha had in his mind, that is, the establishment of a special form of Buddhism meant for ordinarily living men and women. According to the Āgamas, the Buddhist householder is required to get rid of the three

“knots” which will prepare them to take refuge in the Triple Treasure, (Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha). The three knots are the knots that bind the freedom of the soul. The first knot is our intellectual prejudice, or one-sidedness of view whereby we are incapacitated to understand life; by getting rid of this knot, we understand the true meaning of the Fourfold Noble Truth. The second knot means such religious requirements as are practiced by most religions, for instance, offerings of live animals, and practicing all kinds of austerities. The idea is to free oneself from superstition and ritualistic formalism, whereby one can comprehend Buddhism properly, and observe the five moral precepts as given by the Buddha. Thirdly, by the knot of doubt it is meant that those who are imprisoning themselves in the “Castle of Doubt” can not comprehend the eternal spirit of the true Dharma; such will wither away like flowers unblessed by the sunshine. The Buddha wants us to do away with

doubts, and taking refuge in the Triple Treasure, attain to the enlightenment of the Buddha. What distinguishes the teaching of Shinran Shōnin is that when one enters upon the stage of spiritual development where his faith is established once for all, he will never retrograde. This idea is foreshadowed in the Buddha's instruction given to Mahānāman, his nephew, and lord of Kapilavastu. Mahānāman asked, "Suppose one walks through a lonely forest, and a feeling of fear deprives him of his faith in the Triple Treasure; if he happens to die at such a moment, will he be reborn in an evil path?" To this answered the Buddha, "If faith is once established, it will never be disturbed at the moment of his death. It is like cutting a bent tree which will surely fall down in the direction where it bends." The idea expressed exactly coincides with that of Shinran Shōnin, though the latter evidently was not aware of this saying of the Buddha.

The Buddha's idea of establishing a

teaching especially meant for his lay-disciples, did not develop fully in his life-time, but the spirit of the Buddha had quietly been transmitted from generation to generation by his spiritual successors. This became the background for the religious genius of Shinran Shōnin, who, deeply immersed in the spirit of the Buddhist tradition, developed the Shin teaching with deep love for humanity.

When the reader peruses *The Tannishō* in the spirit as unfolded here, he will understand that in Shinran's teaching, the temporary elements are discarded, and the very essence of Buddhism in its most humane aspect is fully revealed.

(4) *Shin Buddhism and Christianity.*

It is interesting to note that while Buddhism contains in it so many ideas different from those of Christianity, Shin Buddhism has something in it suggesting affinities to Christianity; this fact has called out many instructive remarks both from Buddhist and Chris-

tian scholars. It may not, therefore, be altogether out of place here to touch upon the subject, though briefly.

What most characteristically distinguishes Buddhism from other religions and constitutes its central idea, is that of the Dharma. It was this Dharma that attracted Buddhists to the teaching of their master; the object of their worship was not the person of the Buddha, but the Dharma as discovered by him. So said the Buddha, "My body dies, but the Dharma-body dies not."

In Shin Buddhism, Amitabha Buddha is not the creator of the world, nor its manager and the controller, he was in the immemorial past a Bhikshu known as Dharmākāra, he became a Tathagata, enlightened one, after so many ages of moral discipline in accordance with his "Original Vow," he was an ordinary mortal, and not a despot. In other words, he was an ideal being, the most perfected type of humanity.

As he does not interfere irrationally with our lives, he is the one whose light

illuminates the path lying in front of us. The life as we live it, is our own doing and making. Hell was not made by Buddha, but by ourselves, it is like the cocoon imprisoned in which we find ourselves owing to the entanglements of karma spun out by ourselves. Therefore, the Buddhist hell is not a place of eternal punishment, one comes out of it as soon as his karma loses its effectiveness; it is a sort of Christian purgatory. For these reasons, Amitabha Buddha may be symbolised, or rather personified, as if he were an actual character, but in the experience of the Buddhists, he is the Dharma, a spiritual force, that is to say, he is the "Original Vow" itself, and the "Name." When this "Name" or "Vow," or the Dharma is felt in the heart of the Shin followers as a living spiritual force, his self which has been obscuring his inner nature is destroyed, and, all purified and devoid of selfhood, finds himself confronting the Amitabha in this real super-personality. The two as they stand facing each other are not

one, but they are one inasmuch as the one is reflected in the other.

This doctrine is elucidated by Shinran Shōnin in his *Kyō-Gyō-Shin-Shō* which is the main text-book of Shin Buddhism. *Kyō* means "teaching," *Gyō*, "act," *Shin*, "faith," and *Shō*, "attainment." According to Shinran, the teaching is revealed in the *Sutra of the Great Eternal One*, and this sutra teaches that Shin followers in order to be saved are only required to invoke the Name of Amitabha, in which all possible virtues and blessings are included. The Name transcends all human efforts and self-aspirations, yet it stands before us as a real presence; as a real reservoir of all teachings and thoughts it lies there as a kind of explosive which when ignited by faith would blow up the whole universe. Therefore, the Name is act, that is, power. The religious personality, if we could use such a term, is one who believing in this Name has its activity realised in the person. The meaning of

existence is thus gained only when it realises in itself the Dharma. This doctrine of act or the invocation of the Name is expounded in the chapter "On Faith" in *The Kyōgyōshinshō*, and the nature of realisation in the chapter "On Attainment."

There is thus no mediator. As far as I can see, the God of Christianity is a despot representing an absolute judge of justice, and to alleviate his inflexible will, Christ was needed as his only son and as a mediator to be despatched among those mortal beings who grievously sinned against God. The author of *Christianity and Buddhism*, Professor Carpenter writes; "The son of God became son of man, that man, by containing the word and receiving the adoption, might become God." This is no doubt a mystical interpretation of the Johannine doctrine of logos. But this cannot do away with the historical fact that Christ was crucified, the fact that constitutes the basis of Christian idea of salvation. As long as Christ is

the one sent to the world by God as his only beloved son, he is the central figure, and when he is removed from the Christian religion, nothing remains to take his place, there is no Dharma or Logos in it which stands by itself. Thus the idea of transformation which is effected by sacrament or the rite of baptism is the most essential feature of Christian ritualism, observed by all its denominations. In Christianity thus the idea of personality is more important than the idea of Dharma. Perhaps it is due to this conception of an invincible and inflexible power that all sinners are to be thrown into an everlasting fire from which there is absolutely no escape. Even for those who believing in God approach him through the mediation of Christ, it is only through his intercession that they are allowed to come in the presence of the Most August One. That we have to believe in all those historical facts which took place in the life of Christ in order to be really religious, and to be awakened to

the depth of religious consciousness, seems according to our view to go against the truth of our experience.

The Dharma holds in it infinite possibilities of development, and inexhaustible resources of creation, whereas the idea of historical person as an object of worship limits itself making its boundless unfolding impossible.

To sum up, in Shin Buddhism, the Dharma occupies the most central position in which we find embraced both saviour and those that are to be saved. As the Dharma is thus made the centre, the saviour is saved from being despotic and arbitrary, but able to manifest himself as container of infinite virtues and merits, while those that are to be saved are capable of abandoning themselves to the absolute "Willer." Probably this explains the most important fact in the history of Buddhism that it has singularly been free from bloody deeds.

SHUGAKU YAMABE

The Life of Shinran Shōnin

Buddhism, which is based on the life and teaching of Śākyamuni Buddha, has made a wonderful development as it spread over India, China, and Japan, during more than twenty-five centuries of its growth. When we consider this development internally, that is, doctrinally, we find that there are two main currents in it. The one aims at the perfection of personality by one's moral efforts, which is called the "self-power" doctrine; the other is to attain the same end through the Buddha's grace, which is called the "other-power" doctrine. By the perfection of personality is meant the attainment of Buddhahood, which is the end of life. The "self-power" doctrine is what is generally taught by the older schools of Buddhism, while the "other-power" doctrine was proclaimed by one of the greatest geniuses in the history of Buddhism, Shinran Shōnin; and it was

through him that the True Sect of Pure Land, known as Jōdo Shinshū in Japanese, came into being. The Shinshū, or Shin Buddhism is, therefore, a unique system of Buddhism, in which salvation forms the essential part of its doctrine, and Shinran Shōnin is its true founder.

In the following pages, I will try to give a short account of the life of Shinran Shōnin, and a concise exposition of his "other-power" teaching, which will facilitate the understanding of the text here presented in its English translation.

Shinran Shōnin was born on the first day of the fourth month in the third year of Jōan (1173), as the first son of Arinori Hino, at Hino, a village near Kyoto. This was the period when the feud between the two great military clans, the Taira and the Minamoto, almost approached its end after many years of sanguinary warfare. The unstable condition of affairs, political and economical, affected the minds of the people in more than one way.

The little son of the Hino family who was born in the midst of unrest, had further to face the greatest misfortune that may happen to any one. He lost, while still in his childhood, his parents within a short space of time, and how deeply these bereavements touched his little heart can be seen from the fact that when he was only nine years old, he left his home and entered upon a religious life. He was ordained in the first year of Yōwa (1182), as a disciple of Jiyeu, abbot of Shōren-in, Kyoto; Hanyen was his Buddhist name. Later, he went up to Mount Hiyei, and began his student life at Daijōin, belonging to Mudōji. He remained here for twenty years devoting himself to the mastery of the sacred texts of Buddhism.

Mount Hiyei was first opened by Saichō in the Yenryaku era (782-805). He was a great scholar and the founder of the Japanese Tendai School of Buddhism. The Emperor Kwammu was a great admirer of this scholar-monk,

and when he died, the honorary posthumous title, Dengyō Daishi, was given him. He established a monastery on Mount Hiyei, known as Yenryaku-ji where he worked for the propagation of the Tendai teaching, and educated missionaries and scholars of his school. But at the time when Hanyen, the young seeker of truth, came up to be educated in the true spirit of Buddhism, the noble aspirations which stirred the early disciples of Dengyō Daishi were such as did not satisfy this earnest truth-seeker. The monks either vied with one another in aristocratic indulgences, or found themselves as slaves of superstitions, or even engaged in warfare with secular powers. Evidently there were none among them who sincerely pondered the great problems of life and worked for the propagation of Buddhist teachings. In such an atmosphere of degeneration, it was impossible for young Hanyen to find anyone who could solve for him the great religious problem. How could the great teaching of

Śākyamuni Buddha continue its vitality in the arena of such superstitions and degradations? One day he made up his mind to pray to a supernatural power for aid, and began to offer his nightly prayers in the temple of Kwannon (Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva) at Rokkakudo, Kyoto. He walked down every evening all the way to the temple of Kwannon from Mount Hiyei, for a hundred successive nights. At the dawn of the one hundredth night, he received a miraculous instruction from the Bodhisattva, by which he came to see that the ideals of Buddhist life, as far as its true spirit was concerned, did not conflict with the demands of human nature. When his eyes were opened to this conception, he resolved to leave Mount Hiyei.

He now went to see Hōnen Shōnin (1133–1212) at Yoshimizu, Kyoto. He was a follower of the Nembutsu doctrine, which was taught by Zendō (613–681) in China. According to this doctrine, all beings, however good and wise

they may be, or however sinful and wicked, they would be universally saved by invoking the Name of Amitabha Buddha, and be born in the Land of Eternal Light. As Hanyen listened to Hōnen Shōnin's teaching, he saw the light, cast off at once the monastic teaching at Mount Hiyei as the doctrine of unfruitful salvation by "self-power," and threw himself upon Amitabha Buddha's Grace. He became a disciple of Hōnen Shōnin who gave him a new name, Shakkū, which was later changed into Zenshin. This took place when he was twenty-nine years of age. In the second section of *The Tannishō*, we have the passage, "As far as I, Shinran, am concerned, the sole reason for my saying the Nembutsu lies in the teaching of the good man who made me realise that the only condition of salvation by Amida is to say the Nembutsu." The good man here referred to was Hōnen Shōnin, his master. The Nembutsu advocated by Hōnen breaks down the barrier set up between the élite and the

rest; for by the Nembutsu the gate of salvation opens widely to all beings, not excluding even the most wicked. So far all the schools of Buddhism were altogether too exclusive and aristocratic; they required of us to abandon all human desires and ambitions, in order to find the truth of religion in a life not at all connected with our worldly activities. The new doctrine, on the contrary, lays down its foundation in the very midst of human desires, the meaning of which it sees in the "Original Vow" of Amitabha Buddha. It follows, therefore, that its followers lived their ordinary human lives, and did not observe any of those religious austerities which were advocated by the older Buddhist schools. This naturally greatly collided with conservative views.

The wonderful growth of the Nembutsu teaching which started at Yoshimizu, was made the occasion for severe criticisms and scandalising remarks on all sides; enemies grew up rapidly around Hōnen and his group. The

clash finally led to the accusation of the reformers who were made exiles to the distant provinces by an imperial order. Hōnen Shōnin was sent away to Tosa province, and Shakkū (that is, Shinran Shōnin) to Echigo. Hōnen Shōnin was of the advanced age of seventy-five, and this parting naturally and probably meant a farewell both on the part of the master and that of his disciple. Tosa and Echigo were far apart, and considering the conditions of transportation in those days, how lonely and forlorn Shinran must have felt to be left alone in the remote parts of the country. He was not, however, to be dismayed at the calamity, if this helped his faith to grow up all the more in the grace of Amitabha Buddha. He passed five years of a quiet and solitary life in Echigo.

In 1211, Hōnen Shōnin and his disciples were pardoned, and they were free, if they wished to return to the capital. When, however, Shinran learned of the death of his master, he decided not to

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go back directly to Kyoto. He travelled through the eastern parts of Japan, and settled down at Inada in Hitachi province. While there, he became the father of five children by his wife Eshin, for he was then leading a life, "neither of a monk nor of a layman," as he called it.

It was in 1224, while he was still living in the country in company with simple-minded peasants that Shinran Shōnin compiled his immortal work known as "*Ken-Shinjitsu-Jōdo-Kyōgyō-Shinshō-Monru*" in six fasciculi.

In this we find embodied his final views systematically presented: it is the work in which the traditional teaching handed down by the seven patriarchs of India, China, and Japan, is expounded in accordance with his own religious experience.

He came back to Kyoto some time between 1232-1233. His life in Kyoto was a quiet one as before; he wrote many books, and was in constant communication with his followers far and

near, especially those in the eastern parts of Japan.

He began to feel ill on the twenty-first day of the eleventh month of the second year of Kōchō (1262), and on the twenty-eighth of the same month, he quietly died at Zembōin, in Gojō and Nishinotōin, Kyoto. He was ninety years old. It is said that before dying he left this to his disciples, "When my eyes are closed, throw my body into the water of Kamogawa (the river flowing through the eastern part of Kyoto) and let the fish feed on it."

GESHO SASAKI

Foreword

When my thought turns to the ways of our faith taught and professed by some of its followers these days, I cannot help deploring them; for they so differ from the true faith that has been transmitted from our late Master. I am afraid that those who come after us may thereby be led astray. Unless they are fortunate enough to be guided by a teacher of the true faith, how can they ever enter the gate of Easy Way?¹ No one is to confound the doctrine of Other Power² with his own opinions and interpretations. For this reason, I note down some of the sayings of the late Shinran Shōnin, which are still kept alive in my memory. My sole wish is to disperse those doubts which are entertained by our fellow-believers regarding our faith.

I

When the thought is awakened in your heart to say the nembutsu,³ believing that your rebirth in the Pure Land is attained through the inconceivable power of Amida's Original Vow,⁴ you come to share in his grace which embraces all beings forsaking none. You should know that Amida's Vow makes no discrimination as regards the person, old or young, good or bad, only requiring that one has faith. The reason is that the Original Vow is for the salvation of all sentient beings heavily burdened with all sorts of sins and furiously burning with passions. Consequently, in believing this Original Vow, deeds of morality are not required, because there are no deeds of morality that can surpass the nembutsu; nor should one be afraid of evils because there are no evils powerful enough to obstruct the way of Amida's Original Vow.⁵

II

Your intention of coming here after a long journey through more than ten different provinces even at the risk of your lives, was simply to hear from me concerning the way of rebirth in the Pure Land. It would, however, be a great mistake on your part if you should assume my knowledge of some other ways of being reborn in the Pure Land than saying the nembutsu, and also my knowledge of some secret religious texts, and envy me on that account. If you hold such a belief, it is best for you to go to Nara or to Mount Hiei, for there you will find many learned scholars of Buddhism, and learn from them as to the essential means of being reborn in the Pure Land. As far as I, Shinran, am concerned, sole reason for my saying the nembutsu, lies in the teaching of the good teacher who made me realise that the only condition of salvation by Amida is to say the nembutsu. I am entirely ignorant as to whether the nembutsu is really the cause of rebirth

in the Pure Land, or whether it is the deed meant for hell. I should never regret even if I were to go to hell by being deceived by Hōnen Shōnin. The reason is that if I who were so constituted as to become Buddha by performing some deeds of merit, went to hell by reciting the nembutsu instead, then, I might regret that I was deceived. But I am the one who is incapable of observing any deeds of merit, and for that reason, my ultimate abode is no other than hell itself. If the Original Vow of Amida were true, the teaching of Śākyamuni could not be untrue; if the teaching of Śākyamuni were true, the commentaries by Zendō⁶ could not be untrue; if Zendō's commentaries were true, the teaching of Hōnen could not be untrue; if the teaching of Hōnen were true, how could it be possible for me, Shinran, to utter untruth? In short, such is my faith. Beyond this, you are at liberty as to whether you would believe in the Nembutsu or discard it altogether.....

III

Even a good man is reborn in the Pure Land, and how much more so with a wicked man! But people generally think that even a wicked man is reborn in the Pure Land, and how much more so with a good man! Though this latter way of thinking appears at first sight reasonable, yet it is not in accord with the purport of the Original Vow, the faith in the Other Power. The reason is as follows: he who undertakes to perform good deeds by relying on his own power, has no wish to invoke the Other Power, he is not the object of the Original Vow of Amida. If, however, by discarding his reliance on self-power, he invokes the Other Power, he can be reborn in the True Land of Recompense. We who are fully burdened with passions, have no means to escape the bondage of birth and death, no matter what kinds of austerities we performed, and this formed the original motive of Amida for making his Vow. For this

reason, the Shōnin said that if even a good man is reborn in the Pure Land, how much more so with a wicked one!

.....

IV

With regard to charity there is a difference of conception between the Holy Path⁷ school, and the Pure Land school. The charity of the Holy Path school is to be compassionate, tender-hearted, and helpful to others. But this is the hardest thing in this world, this carrying out of the charitable thought to its fullest extent as we may desire. But, according to the Pure Land school, charity consists in bestowing all the merits as we will, upon all sentient beings, with that great compassionate and merciful heart which is attainable when we realise Buddhahood quickly by the virtue of the nembutsu. No matter how tenderly or pitiful we may feel for others, we cannot in this life help them out as we wish; therefore, this kind of charity will fall short of its object. If so, he only who says the nembutsu is able to realise the most compassionate and merciful heart.....

V

I, Shinran, have never, even once, recited the nembutsu for the sake of filial piety. The reason is that all sentient beings have been my parents, brothers and sisters in their successive past lives. Any one attaining Buddhahood in the next life will be able to save others. If the nembutsu were something meritorious to be performed by my own power, I would save my parents by offering it to the Buddha for their benefit. If I first attain Buddhahood by discarding all the attempts of self-power, I would by the means of the miraculous powers which I would acquire, save all those to whom I have been related in some way, however much they may be suffering due to their previous karma, in the six paths of existence⁸ and four forms of life.⁹

VI

It is quite unreasonable to have a quarrel among the followers of the nembutsu, saying that such are my disciples, while such others are not. I, Shinran, have no disciples to be called mine. The reason is, if a man has made others recite the nembutsu by his own efforts, he may call them his disciples. But it is most presumptuous to call those my disciples who recite the nembutsu being embraced in the grace of Amida. It is all due to the karmic condition of things that some follow one teacher while others leave him; and it would be absurd to say that because one leaves one teacher, and joins another group, his nembutsu will be ineffective for his rebirth in the Pure Land. Do they mean to take back the faith given by Amida as if it were their own? Such views are most decidedly unreasonable. If one is in accordance with the natural reason of things, he will understand where to be grateful to Amida, and where to the teacher.....

VII

He who recites the nembutsu is the way that knows no obstructions. The reason is, he who lives the faith, is revered by the gods of heaven and earth, is not obstructed by devils and heretics. No sins, no karmic effects will affect him, and as he stands above morality, he is the way that knows no obstructions.....

VIII

The nembutsu is "no-deed" and "no-good" when viewed from the point of its followers. It is "no-deed," because when they practice the nembutsu, they do not practice it of their own accord. It is "no-good," because it is not an act of goodness performed of their own accord. Since it is solely due to the Other Power, and beyond their self-power, it is "no-deed" and "no-good" when viewed from the point of its followers.

.....

IX

When I asked the Master, "How is it that though I recite the nembutsu, a feeling of excessive joy arises not in my heart, nor do I desire to hasten to go to the Pure Land?" The Master said, "I, Shinran, have had the same doubt. O Yuiembō, you too have it! But when you consider the matter well and carefully, you will feel quite assured of your going to the Pure Land. Why? Just because you have no feeling of delight about what you ought to be in perfect ecstasy, is the working of passions which prevents you from being delighted. Knowing this fact, Buddha said that we are all common mortals filled with passions; and when we understand that the merciful Vow of the Other Power was just for the sake of such beings, we can remain all the more assured of our salvation. Not being so desirous of hastening to the Pure Land, we feel very much dejected, when we are slightly ill, at the thought of prob-

able death. This, too, is the working of the passions, for they are so fiercely powerful that we feel reluctant even to abandon this old abode of pain and suffering, in which we have been transmigrating from time immemorial down to the present day, and that we have no longing whatever for the Land of Bliss [meaning the Pure Land] where we have never yet been born before. But when our karma in this world of patience expires, we have to leave it helplessly, however reluctant we may feel, and it will be then that we shall be born in the other land. Amida has special compassion with those who are not desirous to hasten there. Considering all this, you may feel more than ever assured of the great merciful Vow, and definitely settled in your belief as to your rebirth in the Pure Land. If, on the other hand, you feel so transported with the thought of hastening to the Pure Land, you may reasonably grow suspicious of your not having any passions whatever."

X

The Master said in regard to the nembutsu that its reason is where it transcends all reasonings, because it is inexpressible, indefinable and inconceivable.

Now, in the by-gone days, when the Master was still alive, there were a great number of people all of whom wishing to obtain one faith whereby they could in future be born in the Pure Land, made long journeys to the Capital, and in company, received the Shōnin's direct instructions. Among the many people, old and young, countless in number indeed, who recite the nembutsu under the guidance of those elder followers, I have been informed that there are a great many who entertain such heretical views as have not been taught by the Master himself. In the following are itemised such irregularities.

XI

There are some who, seeing a simple-hearted believer recite the nembutsu, alarm him by asking whether he does so by believing the inconceivability of the Vow or that of the Name; such ones would confound him without clearly explaining for him what these two inconceivabilities mean. This is a serious situation of which we must have a clear understanding after due consideration. Amida by virtue of the inconceivability of the Vow, thought out the Name which was easy to retain and easy to recite, and he promised to welcome those who recited the Name; and therefore, believing that we are to escape birth and death by the inconceivability of his great merciful Vow, we recite the nembutsu; and as we know that this is due to the will of Amida, there is nothing of our self-will mixed in it, and for this reason we are, in accordance with the Original Vow, to be born in the True Pure Land.

Thus in believing the inconceivability of the Vow, that of the Name is comprised in it, and the two inconceivabilities, the Vow and the Name, are coalesced into one showing no cleavage between them. On the other hand, he who, putting his self-will into the matter, entertains the dualism of good and evil as affecting his rebirth in the Pure Land, helpfully or otherwise, does not trust in the inconceivability of the Vow, for he works for his rebirth by the aid of his self-will and recites the nembutsu as something achieved by himself. He is the one who does not believe in the inconceivability of the Name either. Even with his disbelief, however, he may be born in the outskirts of the Pure Land known as the Castle for the Dull and Doubting and the Womb of Ignorance, and will, in accordance with the Vow of salvation, ultimately obtain his rebirth in the True Pure Land; this is due to the inconceivable virtue of the Name; and as this is at the same time due to the inconceivability of the Vow,

these two should after all be regarded as one.

XII

“The salvation of those who do not read and study the sutras and commentaries is doubtful.” Such a view as this is to be regarded as very far from the truth. All the sacred books devoted to the explanation of the truth of the Other Power, show that every one who, believing in the Original Vow, recites the nembutsu, will become a Buddha. Excepting this, what learning is needed to be reborn in the Pure Land? Let those who have any doubt on this point, learn hard and study hard in order to understand the meaning of the Original Vow. It is a great pity that there are some who, in spite of a hard study of the sacred books, are unable to understand the true meaning of the sacred doctrine. Since the Name is so formed as to be easily recited by any simple-hearted person who may have no understanding of even a single phrase in the sacred books, the practice is called easy.

Those who devote themselves to study

belong to the order of Holy Path, and theirs is said to be difficult to practice. According to a scriptural authority, those who fail to grasp the value of learning, and get settled down with the idea of gaining fame or wealth, will find it doubtful whether they are destined for the Land of Purity, or not. A dispute is at present going on between those who hold the doctrine that the nembutsu is the only means of salvation, and the followers of the Holy Path; each side regards its own doctrine as superior to the other, and depreciates it. In this wrangling the holy truth of Buddhism itself is vilified and put to shame. Does it not amount after all to the defamation of one's own doctrine?

Even when all the schools of the Holy Path unite in attacking you, saying that the nembutsu is meant for people of inferior quality, and its doctrine is shallow and contemptible, you should, instead of answering the criticism, say, "We believe in the doctrine of nembutsu, because we were told by

our teacher that we, low and ignorant as we are, should be saved by having faith in it; though it may appear contemptible to people of superior quality, yet it is the best doctrine for us; however excellent other doctrines may be, we are not so made as to be able to follow them, as they are beyond our capacity; and since the will of the Buddhas is to save us all by whatever means from birth and death, you will let us alone with our own faith." If, so saying, you show them no signs of ill-feeling, who would ever do you any harm? Moreover, where there is a dispute, there is a great deal of passions excited. A scriptural passage tells us that the wise keep themselves away from such disputation.

Said the late Shōnin, "According to the Buddha Śākyamuni, there are people who believe this doctrine, and there are also people who would abuse it. Now, as for myself, I believe this doctrine, but there are other people who denounce it, proving how true the Buddha's words

are. For this reason, you are all the more assured of your rebirth in the Pure Land. If, however, there were by chance no abusers of this doctrine, we may suspect how it happens that they are all believers and no abusers. Though I say this, I do not mean that I like to be abused. I only want to tell you that when the Buddha taught this doctrine for us of these latter days, he knew that there would be both believers and abusers of it, so that we should be saved from entertaining suspicion about it."

I wonder if people nowadays pursue their studies with the purpose of subduing their opponents or merely of gaining their point in argument? When our studies lead us to the knowledge of the Original Will of Amida, and of his merciful Vow which knows no bounds and when we are thus prepared to teach those who being humble feel some doubt as to their rebirth in the Pure Land, in order to make them realise that the Original Vow tran-

scends such distinctions as good and evil, pure and defiled, it is then that we have the value of scholarship. If, however, those scholars, finding, by chance, people who, in accordance with the Original Vow, recite the nembutsu in their simple-hearted way, scare them by telling that the Pure Land is only accessible through learning, they are really evil ones in the Dharma, and the avowed enemy of the Buddha. They themselves have not only no faith in the Other Power, but try to lead others astray. They ought to be awe-struck at the thought of disobeying the late Master's instruction. They are to be pitied indeed as running counter to the Original Vow of Amida.

XIII

It is said again that a person who does not mind evils just because of the inconceivable virtue of the Original Vow, will not be born into the Pure Land. This is known as making too much of the Original Vow. One who holds this view fails to understand the Original Vow, and is ignorant of the karmic potency of deeds, good and bad.

Good thoughts are cherished because of the karma of the past good deeds, so is the cherishing of evil thoughts, due to the evil karma of the past deeds. The late Master once said that even as insignificant a sin as dust on the tip of a rabbit's or sheep's hair is committed owing to the karmic law of deeds. On another occasion, the Master said, "O Yuiembō! Do you believe everything I say to you?" "Yes, Master," replied Yuiembō, "I do." "Then," continued the Master, wishing to be confirmed in his reply, "you would never

disobey my order whatever it may be?" When Yuiembō gave an affirmative answer, the Master said, "Suppose you are asked to murder one thousand men, which would make your rebirth into the Pure Land definitely settled." "Although," said Yuiembō, "It is Master's command, yet I am not capable of murdering even a single soul." "Then," said Shōnin, "why did you say you would not disobey my order whatever it may be? You see by this that if everything were in your power, murdering one thousand men would be carried out just as soon as you decide to do so for the sake of your rebirth in the Pure Land. But as you have no karmic law of murder in you, even a single man you would not injure, because you are good. Though you may have no mind to injure others, yet it may not be impossible for you to murder a hundred or a thousand men."

This was said by the Master to show us that we do not quite understand what is meant by the inconceivable virtue of

the Original Vow which saves us; because our deeds good or bad do not issue from our self-will. Some time ago, there was a man who thought wrongfully to this effect that as the Vow was made for the salvation of evil doers, evil deeds are to be intentionally committed to be reborn in the Pure Land. When his evil deeds came to be gradually known, the Master wrote, "Though a remedy may be at hand one must not take poison." The Master gave this warning in order to let him abandon his false view, but it did not necessarily mean that evil itself was an obstacle to salvation. If the Original Vow is to be believed through the observance of the moral precepts, how could we ever escape birth and death? Miserable beings as we are, indeed, real relief comes to us only when the Original Vow is accepted. Whatever this may be, no evil deeds will ever be committed when there is no karmic potency working within ourselves.

Some people earn their livelihood by

catching fish with hooks or nets, some maintain their lives by catching birds or beasts in the fields or hills, and some are engaged in business, and some pass their days by tilling land. They are all equally engaged in the business of life; when the time comes, and their respective karma is ripened, nobody can tell what they should do. Notwithstanding the statement of the Master's, there are nowadays some who affecting themselves to be very pious, say that only good persons are fit to recite the nem-butsum; while some even go so far as to hang placards in their place of worship, announcing that persons of such and such conducts are not to be admitted. Do they belong to a class of people who are busy with outward shows of piety and enthusiasm, while inwardly they cherish falsehood? Even the sinful deeds committed by those who make too much of the Original Vow are actuated by their karmic potency. For these reasons, let us leave all our deeds, good and bad, to the working of karmic

potency, and put our absolute reliance on the Original Vow which is called the Other Power. It is stated in *The Yuishinshō* [Treaties on Absolute Faith] thus, "How could one fathom the extent of Amida's power, and declare himself to be too sinful to be saved?" Inasmuch as one has a mind to make too much of the Original Vow, he ought to have his determined reliance upon the Other Power.

If we were to believe the Original Vow, after having extinguished all our karmic relations and worldly passions, it would be so much better for us that we have no thought of making too much of the Original Vow. But then, if we have extinguished our worldly passions, we are Buddhas, and for Buddhas the Vow would not be necessary, which was made after the meditations for five kalpas. As those who blame others for making too much of the Vow, are also filled with worldly passions and impurities, are they not also making too much of the Vow? What evil is it that

is said to be making too much of the Vow, and what evil is it that is not making too much of the Vow? Is this not after all childish talk?

XIV

It is said that one must believe that reciting the nembutsu once is enough to cancel his accumulated sins for 8,000,000,000 kalpas.

This view applies to a person who, having committed the ten evil deeds,¹⁰ and the five grave offences¹¹ ordinarily without reciting the nembutsu, was instructed for the first time at his death-bed, by a teacher who taught him that if he will recite the nembutsu once, his sins for 8,000,000,000 kalpas will be cancelled, and if he recites ten times, the accumulated sins for $10 \times 8,000,000,000$ kalpas will be cancelled, and he will be reborn in the Pure Land. This instance was given in order to show how grave the ten evil deeds and five grave offences were, and how great the sin-cancelling power of the nembutsu recited once or ten times was. This view is far from our faith. When enlightened by the light of Amida Buddha, faith is

awakened in our heart, which, growing as solid as a diamond, would join us to the order of steadfastness,¹² and at the time of our death, all our worldly passions and evil hindrances would be transmuted so as to make us attain Enlightenment.

Keeping always in mind that, unless we have such a merciful Vow, we, miserable sinners, have no means to escape birth and death, we should cherish the idea that the nembutsu we keep on reciting through life is our expression of gratitude for the great grace of Amida Buddha. If we have to believe that each recitation of the nembutsu is for the purpose of cancelling our sins, it amounts to this that our own efforts are needed for cancelling our sins in advance before the rebirth into the Pure Land is secured. If it is so, as every thought we may conceive while living, grows to make bondage of birth and death, our rebirth into the Pure Land may be said to become possible only by constantly reciting the nembutsu even

up to the moment of death. But as the working of karma has its own way beyond our understanding, we do not know what will happen to us; we may die from an unexpected accident or suffer diseases of excessive pain, and may not be able to be abiding in the right thought. In such cases, it would be difficult for us to recite the nembutsu. Then, how is it possible for us to cancel our sins committed in the meantime? If our sins are not cancelled, is not our rebirth into the Pure Land impossible? If we entrust ourselves to the Vow of "Once saved, never forsaken," we shall instantly be born into the Pure Land, in spite of our sinful deeds committed in circumstances beyond control, and having died without reciting the nembutsu. While we are able to recite the nembutsu, as our day of attaining the supreme enlightenment is drawing near, we are only to become more ardent in relying on Amida and increase the sense of gratitude for his grace. Those who are intent upon cancelling their sins,

are relying on self-power, and as their main aim is to wish to remain in the right thought at the time of death, they have no faith in the Other Power.

XV

That we can attain the supreme enlightenment in this world with this body full of worldly passions—this is unreasonable. It is in accordance with the esoteric teaching of the Shingon school that this physical body of ours is the Buddha himself, and this is attained only through a mystical disciplinary system of the three functions, body, speech, and thought. The purification of the six sense-organs, eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind is the teaching of the one vehicle doctrine expounded in the *Sutra of the Lotus of the Good Law*, and the merit gained by the observance of the four forms of proper conduct.¹³ These are accomplished after hard discipline by men of superior capacity, and attainable only by meditation which culminates in enlightenment. The attainment, however, of the supreme enlightenment in the next life is the teaching of the Other Power school, as it

comes with the confirmation of faith. It is attained with ease by men of inferior capacity, and this is the doctrine transcending the dualism of good and evil.

Now since it is quite hard to extinguish worldly passions and evil karma-hindrances, even the sanctified monks of the Shingon and Hokke¹⁴ schools pray for the highest enlightenment in the next life. As far as the followers of the Other Power are concerned, they lack in morality and higher intelligence, yet, when they embark on the boat of Amida's Vow, they are able to cross over the turbulent sea of birth and death, and arrive at the shore of the Pure Land; the dark clouds of worldly passions, will then hasten to clear away, for the enlightening moon of truth begins to shine; and this is the time we have the supreme enlightenment in which we are identified with the infinite light shining throughout the ten quarters and bestowing benefits on all sentient beings. Are those who try to attain

the highest enlightenment in this corporeal body able to show themselves like Śākyamuni Buddha in different forms for the purpose of saving all beings? Are they adorned with the thirty-two marks and eighty subordinate marks of the great man and able to bestow benefits by preaching? Such is the life of one who attained the supreme enlightenment in this world. In *The Wasan*,¹⁵ we have,

“At that moment when faith in the
Enlightened One is perfected,
Pure and lasting as the diamond,
Then shall the Spiritual Light shine
upon us and guard us,—
The light which forever guideth us
from rebirth and death.”

In this way, as we are saved and never forsaken, ever since the confirmation of our faith, we shall no longer transmigrate in the six different paths of existence. The birth-and-death is thus forever kept away from us. Do they take this way of understanding for the supreme enlightenment? How pitiful

they are! The late Master told his disciples, "I have learnt that the followers of the Pure Land teaching believe the Original Vow in the present life, and attain the supreme enlightenment in the Pure Land in the next life."

XVI

It is said that whenever a follower of our faith happens to be somehow angry, or to commit misdeeds, or to dispute with another follower, he ought to reform himself without fail. This view may mean that evils are to be uprooted and good deeds to be practiced [and this according to the doctrine of the Holy Path]. With the followers of the sole practice of the nembutsu, there is a reformation only once, which is made in the following way: a person who has not hitherto known the true teaching of the Original Vow and the Other Power, comes, through the wisdom bestowed on him by Amida, to find out that his rebirth into the Pure Land would be impossible through his self-power, and then turning his eye away from it, he begins to take refuge in the Original Vow. This is the reformation.

If it is necessary to reform oneself all the time in order to be reborn into the Pure Land, as his life may end be-

fore his exhaling breath is succeeded by an inhaling one, he may die before he could reform himself and regain a mind of tenderness and forbearance. In such a case, will the Vow of "Once saved, never forsaken" be in vain?

Those who say with lips that they trust in the power of the Original Vow, think in their minds that though the Vow is so inconceivably wonderful as to save evil persons, yet its true objects are after all good persons. This is mistrusting the power of the Vow, which will end in losing their reliance on the Other Power: and time may come for them to regret that they are only to be reborn into the outskirts of the Pure Land. When faith is obtained, our rebirth into the Pure Land is entirely left to the will of Amida, as it is not of our contrivance. When we turn away from the right path, let us be devoted all the more to the power of the Vow, for then the feeling of tenderness and forbearance will naturally grow in our heart.

With regard to the rebirth into the Pure Land, we should on every occasion abandon the thought of self-justification and remain enraptured, body and mind, in the grace of Amida which knows no bounds. The nembutsu then will come by itself to be recited. This is called natural, by which it is meant the act is not of our contrivance, that is to say, it comes from the Other Power. I have, however, heard that there are some who talk knowingly about being natural, not comprehending its true meaning. How deplorable they are!

XVII

It is said that those who are born in the outskirts of the Pure Land will ultimately go to hell.

Where in any of the sacred books is this statement to be found? It is very regrettable to learn that such a view has circulated among the learned. I wonder how they study the sacred books and commentaries. As those who are not perfect in faith entertain some doubts as regards the Original Vow, are to be reborn in the outskirts of the Pure Land, and after having atoned there themselves for their sins of doubt, they will attain the supreme enlightenment in the Pure Land. This is what I learned about the provisional outskirts of the Pure Land. Most of us are, owing to imperfect faith, to proceed to the outskirts of the Pure Land, but to declare that their destination is finally for hell is to tell a lie on Amida.

XVIII

It is said that according to the amount of donation made for the cause of Buddhism, one would become a greater or a smaller Buddha.

This is altogether absurd. It is just a figurative speech. In the first place, no estimate as to the size of Buddha, either large or small, is admissible. When measurements are applied to the body of Amida, the Lord of the Pure Land, they are only concerned with the form of the temporary body of compensation. When the supreme enlightenment is attained, it is neither long nor short, neither square nor round; it is, in colour, neither blue nor yellow, nor red, nor white, nor black; being so, how can we speak of the size of Buddha? It is sometimes said that when one recites the nembutsu he may have either a great or a small vision of Buddha while reciting. And the giving is an act of *dānapāramitā* (charity). No matter how valuable offerings be which

are made to the Buddha, or to the teacher, they are of no use, so long as the donor lacks in faith. Though he may not make even such a small offering as a sheet of paper or half a penny, he will truly be in accord with the Vow, only if his whole heart is given up to the Other Power in profound faith. As the fellow-believers cherish worldly desires pretending to be working for Buddhism, it is likely that they are talked ill of.

Postscript

The views above stated, I am sure, originated from the differences in faith. According to the talks of the late Master, in the time of Hōnen Shōnin while the latter was still alive, he had many disciples; but it was only a few whose faith was one with that of the Master. A dispute once took place between the late Master and his brother-disciples under Hōnen Shōnin. This was occasioned by the statement of the Master to the effect that his faith and that of his teacher were identical. His brother-disciples such as Seikwanbō and Nembutsubō vehemently disputed this statement saying that the Master's faith could not be identical with that of Hōnen Shōnin. The Master then replied that if he said that he were as great as his teacher in learning and ability, he should be ashamed of self-conceit, but as far as his faith in salvation (*ōjō*)¹⁶ was concerned, it was one, the Master and the Shōnin were one in

faith. This reply did not satisfy them, for they insisted that that was impossible; at last they agreed to settle the question in the presence of Hōnen Shōnin. When they explained the matter in detail to Hōnen Shōnin, he said, "My faith was given by Amida, and so was that of Zenshimbō [meaning Shinran]; this being so, we are one in faith"; and further he said, "Those who have a faith different from mine, would by no means go to the same Pure Land where I am bound" Judging from this, we know even in those days there were differences of faith already even among the followers of the sole practice of the nenbutsu, showing that some already entertained a faith different from that of the Master.

These things are reiterated by me, because I feel my life to be like a drop of dew on a withered blade of grass. I have been always ready to listen to my fellow-believers as to their doubts, and to tell them all that I had learned from the Master. But I am afraid that con-

fusion may arise when my eyes are closed. For this reason, I advise you to study well the sacred books which the late Master used to peruse with special appreciation, whenever you are in danger of being misled by your fellow-believers who hold those views aforementioned.

Generally speaking, the sacred books contain both real and provisional teachings. It was the Master's spirit to adopt the real part, and to leave aside the provisional. You cannot be too careful not to misunderstand the sacred books. I have thus given you some selections [from the sayings of the late Master] as the important standard of the faith, which are appended here for your guidance.

The Master was wont to say, "When I carefully ponder over the meaning of the Vow issuing from the meditations of Amida for five kalpas, I find it was all meant for myself alone. That is why I feel so grateful for the Original Vow which was thought out by Amida

to save this person of mine who is so sinful."

When I now consider this reflection of the Master, I find that it is in perfect accordance with the following golden passage from Zendō, "Know that you are ignorant men of sin and evil, subject to birth and death, ever sinking, ever transmigrating since time immemorial, and with no chance of deliverance." It was from the merciful heart of the Master that, putting himself as an example, he endeavoured to wake us who go astray without realising how deep our sins are and how great Amida's grace is.

Indeed, paying no attention to the greatness of Amida's grace, we merely talk saying, this is good, that is bad. Said the Master, "Whether things are good or bad, I know absolutely nothing of it. The reason is this. If my insight were as penetrating as to fathom the depth of Amida's own mind as to the goodness and badness of things, I might be allowed to say that I knew

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what was good and what not. But in this world of impermanence and of pain and suffering, which is like a house on fire, where beings full of evil passions are inhabiting, all is vain, all is empty, there is nothing true except the nembutsu, which only is true."

You and I, we are all talking about things vain, of which there is one thing which I most deplore. The reason is this. When they talk about faith in connection with the nembutsu, when trying to explain it to others, they quote passages from the Master each pretending them to be his own, and this is in order to silence others, or to gain victory over the opponents. This is what I consider to be most deplorable. I wish you to carefully weigh the matter and have a clear understanding of it.

While the above are not my own views they may appear rather awkward, as I am not acquainted very much with the sacred books, and have no deep understanding as to the meaning of the doctrine; only I have written down a

hundredth part of the Master's words which I recall. How regrettable it is that those who have been blessed to say the nembutsu, are bound for the outskirts of the Pure Land, instead of directly going to the True Pure Land.

In order not to have any of my fellow-believers belonging to the same association differ in faith, I take up my brush in tears, and write this down. Let this be entitled "Tract on Deploring the Heterodoxies." It is not to be shown to outsiders.

NOTES

1. The Easy Way stands in contrast to the Difficult Way, and means the Shin teaching, which is thought by its followers to be the easiest and shortest road to salvation.

2. "Other Power" refers to the Original Vow of Amida, relying on which we are sure of our final salvation and enlightenment.

3. *Nembutsu* in Japanese means "thinking of the Buddha," that is, of Amida. In this case it is to invoke the name of Amida believing in the efficacy of his Original Vow.

4. Amida made forty-eight vows at the beginning of his career as a Bodhisattva, which are detailed in the *Sukhavativyuha Sutra*, the principal text of Shin Buddhism. The most important one of those vows is the eighteenth, in which Amida, while yet in his Bodhisattvahood, set forth his strong resolution to save all beings without exception, if they call upon his name even only once in sincerity of heart.

5. The dotted line following here as elsewhere indicates that there was something more in Shinran's sayings, which however the original author of *The Tannisho* for some reason thought it unnecessary to quote in their entirety.

6. Zendo was one of the Chinese teachers of

the Pure Land doctrine, and admired greatly by Honen and Shinran.

7. The Holy Path school and the Difficult Path mean the same thing. The main idea is to rely upon one's own virtues and merits for enlightenment and salvation. Shin Buddhism, that is, the school of Shinran, on the contrary, repudiates the all-sufficiency of self-reliance and makes the "Other Power" the one thing that is needed in the work of salvation.

8. The six paths of existence are: hells, heavens, the animal world, human world, one for hungry ghosts and for fighting demons.

9. The four forms of life are: those that are born from a womb, the egg-born, the moisture-born, and those that come into existence through transformation.

10. The ten evil deeds are: destroying life, theft, adultery; lying, being double-tongued, speaking evil of others, talking nonsense; greed, anger, irrationality.

11. The five grave offences: matricide, patricide, arhat-murdering, causing dissension in the Brotherhood, and causing the Buddha's body to bleed.

12. One is said to have joined the order of steadfastness when one is firmly established in faith so as never to retrograde.

13. Literally, deeds conducive to a peaceful

state of mind. They are: 1. to keep oneself away from such people and conditions as to disturb one's quiet devotion to meditation; 2. not to talk in any way to cause uneasiness in others; 3. to preach the Dharma (Law) impartially to others; and 4. to vow to treat all beings with love and kindness.

14. Both the Shingon and the Hokke belong to the Holy Path as they try to save themselves through their self-power no matter how long and how severe this discipline may prove to them. The Shingon is the mystic school of Buddhism and its founder in Japan is Kōbō Daishi (774-835); while the Hokke based on the teaching of the *Saddharma-pundarika Sutra* was established by Nichiren Shōnin (1222-1282).

15. Hymns composed by Shinran Shonin.

An English translation by Shugaku Yamabe and Adams Beck under the title, *Buddhist Psalms*, was published in the "Wisdom of the East" series, John Murray, London.

16. Ojo, literally means, "to go and be born" in the Land of Purity.

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